



Screening Studies (All Tacoma Smelter Plume Studies)

The first step in evaluating an environmental situation is called a screening study. It's a way to gather a limited amount of data to generate a general picture of the situation.

Screening studies help us understand:

- Whether a concern is a significant issue or not
- What areas are most likely affected by the situation
- Where limited funds for more detailed studies would be most wisely spent, given need to address highest risk areas first

A screening study looks at:

- Sample sites most likely to have the most contaminated values
 - Air samples in an industrialized area, at a busy intersection, etc.
 - Soil samples in places least disturbed where toxic particles could have accumulated, and not been removed or buried
- Identifying where we anticipate finding highest levels, when sampling is not yet feasible at this stage
 - Under the worst possible scenario, how much soil contamination would we anticipate, given what we know about wind, weather patterns, etc?

Some screening studies look at areas of particular concern

- May help identify a trend or pattern that tells us this is sensitive location
- Helps experts know whether more detailed studies or protective actions are needed

Screening studies help characterize a general area

- Not useful for anticipating what is in my backyard, or in my neighborhood
- Can't draw conclusions about specific locations from screening level studies

What these studies provide to date:

- Broad preliminary understanding of the extent (how big) and scope (the significance) of contamination
 - Gaining better understanding of where the affected area is
 - Finding moderate contamination over a widespread area, with hot spots unlikely
- Some understanding of the overall character of the "site"
- Enough information to support the need for implementing protective measures
- Enough information to tell us that solving the problems of this "site" will take decades
- Information to plan further assessment projects
- Information that will be used to approach the liable party (Asarco)

We Don't Have Enough Information to...

- predict contamination at individual properties
- assess general contamination at the city scale
- define how cleanup should be done
- identify where the “worst first” sites are located